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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FOR USG ENGAGEMENT WITH "SILATECH"
ARAB YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

REF: A. DOHA 130
[1](#)B. 2008 DOHA 146

This cable contains an Action Request - see comment.

KEY POINTS

-- "Silatech" ("Your Connection" in Arabic), a one-year-old Arab youth employment initiative founded and funded by the Qatari Amir's consort Shaykha Mozah, is preparing for its second summit, June 8-9 in Doha.

-- The summit will be used to announce new commitments to the initiative and enhance networking among governments, the private sector, and civil society groups working on addressing Arab youth unemployment, according to the organization's CEO Rick Little.

-- Little told us Silatech wants to be receptive to the new Obama Administration, and would welcome the USG playing a "supporting but not dominant role" in the initiative.

COMMENT

-- Embassy believes Silatech is worthy of engagement by USG organizations and officials working in the field of youth employment in the Arab world. Such engagement would help synchronize USG regional activities with those of this well-funded initiative which is supported by key individuals and organizations, including the United Nations, International Labor Organization, World Bank, and U.S. companies such as Cisco.

-- As a first step, engagement could involve meetings or a video-conference with Silatech staff by MEPI, USAID, and/or others working in this field. This would pave the way for possible USG involvement in the June summit. The proposed Congressional field hearing at Education City (Ref A) would also be a natural vehicle for Congress to learn more about Silatech and regional initiatives to combat Arab youth unemployment.

-- POC for follow-up on this recommended engagement is Economic Officer David Fabrycky, available at Tel: 974-496-6731; Fax: 974-496-6709; Email: FabryckyDA@state.gov.

End Key Points and Comment.

¶1. As reported reftel, Silatech is a year-old organization/initiative intended to "engage the private, public, and civil society sectors to promote large-scale job creation, entrepreneurship, and access to capital and markets." The initiative is the brainchild of the Amir's consort Shaykha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned (the Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation, which is the home of Education City and six branch U.S. universities). The royal couple has personally donated USD 100 million to Silatech as seed capital.

¶2. CEO Rick Little (an American citizen) said Shaykha Mozah is very engaged with the organization through her position as Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Board also includes luminaries such as former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, Chairman of the Financial Times Sir David Bell, Cisco Chairman and CEO John Chambers, former Irish President Mary Robinson, and Chairman of Tata and Sons Ratan Tata. The staff includes several Amcits.

¶3. The organization says it will focus on three areas:
-- Improving access to skills training and placement services, micro and small and medium-sized enterprises' access to capital, business development services and markets.
-- Promotion of policies to stimulate increased employment and enterprise opportunities.
-- Improving the "mindset" in the region to improve society's recognition and support for youth employment.

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¶4. To accomplish these goals, Silatech says it intends to:
-- Provide thought leadership - to stimulate the design of comprehensive local youth employment strategies and programs based on best practices and cutting-edge research.
-- Mobilize investment - to assure large scale impact.
-- Provide innovative technologies - to facilitate skills development, job placement, access to markets and to achieve economies of scale.

¶5. To implement this vision, the June 8-9 summit in Doha is intended to "unveil a range of new (financial and programmatic) commitments," according to Little. Silatech has decided to focus for now on pilot projects in six countries: Syria, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Qatar. Details and the stage of development of these projects are unclear, though Little mentioned pending formation of banking consortiums to mobilize capital.

¶6. More information on the organization can be found at: www.silatech.com.

LeBaron